

## CHAPTER SIX: SKULL VALLEY PLANNING DISTRICT



### LAND USE

Land owners and administrators of the Skull Valley planning district include the Bureau of Land Management, privately owned ranches, the Skull Valley/Goshute Indian Reservation, the Wasatch National Forest and the Dugway Proving Ground.

The only concentration of population in the valley is the unincorporated town of Terra, a settlement made up primarily of people who work at the Dugway Proving Ground. Terra developed from the sale of five-acre parcels by the BLM. The zoning for the area is RR-5 which allows five-acre lots. However, much of the development appears to be on smaller lots.

(Please refer to Tooele County Proposed Land Use and Proposed Zoning Maps, and to chapter ten for recommendations and zoning ordinance change suggestions.)

#### Residential Development

The residential development in the area has occurred in three forms: the unincorporated town of Terra with allowable densities of one unit per five acres; residential development associated with ranches and agricultural uses on larger acreage; and military residential development in the English Village section of the Dugway Proving Ground (which falls into the West Desert planning district, but is included here due to transportation and commuting employee connections between this district and the West Desert).

Residential development in Terra has, in some cases, exceeded the one-use-per-five-acres allowed. Greater county involvement in Terra development would likely be required to address problems.

#### Agriculture

Land is primarily used for agriculture, ranching, farming

and grazing on public lands. Most of this district is zoned MU-40 which allows a broad spectrum of uses, but this zone should perhaps be changed to a same density, but less permissive zone (in conjunction with similar zoning ordinance change recommendations) in order to promote agricultural and deter more industrial land uses.

#### Commercial/Industrial

There is limited commercial development and no industrial development in Skull Valley. Residents must commute to Tooele Valley for goods and services. The limited infrastructure, population and services in the valley are not supportive of growth in commercial or industrial uses.

### ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC

#### Demographic Summary

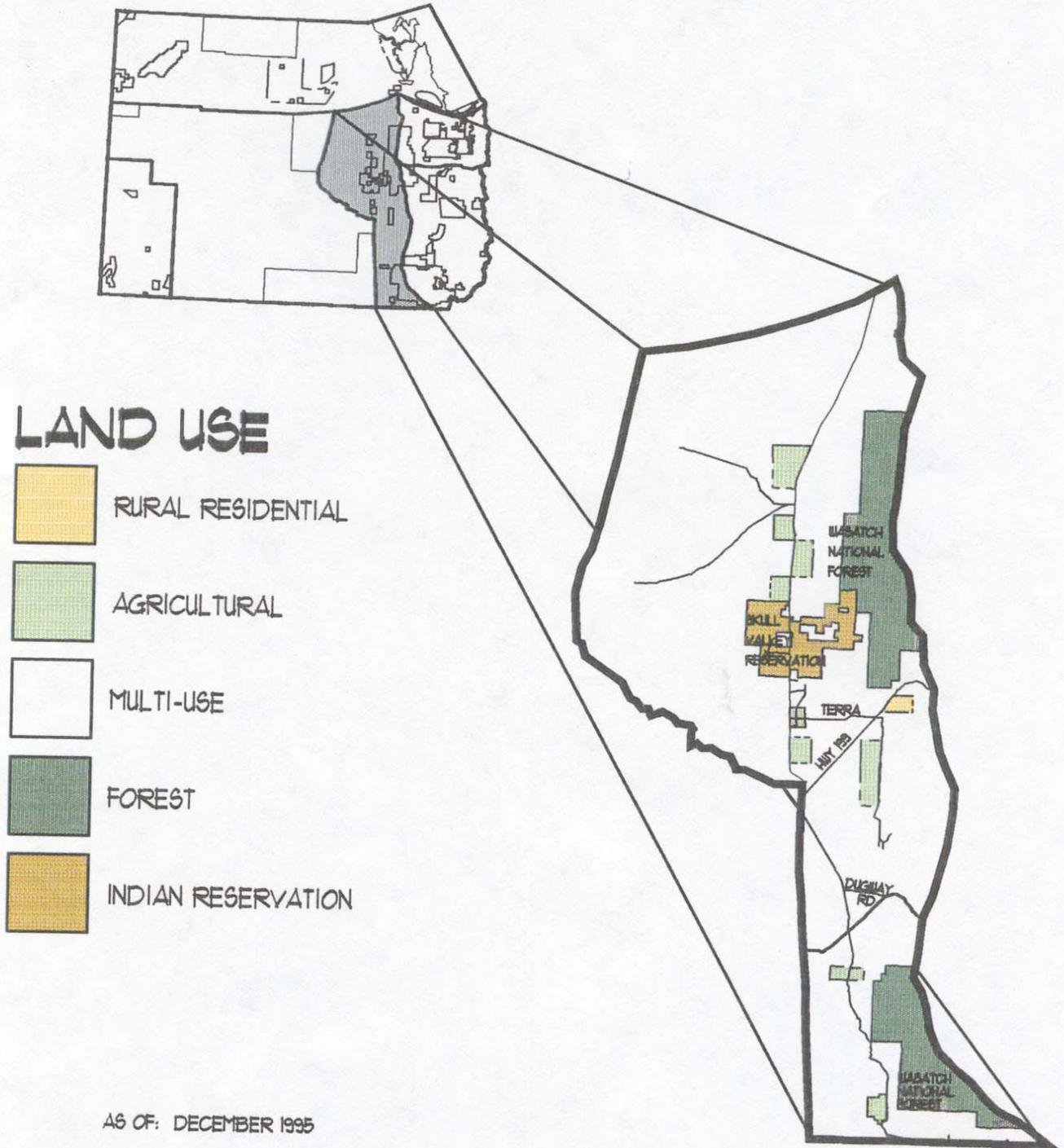
The Skull Valley population is found in the unincorporated town of Terra, English Village at the Dugway Proving Ground and ranches located in the valley. According to county utility records, there are approximately 30 households in Terra and 11 in the Valley. Using the average household size for Tooele County (3.06 persons), this translates into an estimated population of 125 persons. In addition, the population at the military base is estimated by county personnel at 522. Therefore, a total population estimate for the area is 647.

Terra is a low-density community located on the east benches of the southern end of the Stansbury Mountains, overlooking Skull Valley. Many of the residents of Terra are civilian employees at Dugway. The town was greatly impacted by a forest/brush fire during the summer of 1994.



TOOELE COUNTY  
PLANNING DISTRICT

SKULL VALLEY



## Economic Summary

The major economic activity in Skull valley is ranching. Other commercial activity is nearly nonexistent: the English Village development is self-contained on the army base; there is very limited commercial activity in Terra and along Skull Valley Road which traverses the valley. Some of this commercial activity is related to the Indian reservation. At the Rowley Junction at I-80 there is an abandoned commercial development.

There is a potential for renewed commercial demand at the Skull Valley exit off I-80. Because of the distances between services along the I-80 corridor, some highway-servicing retail could be supported. Traffic at the intersection is also dependent on the future of Dugway Proving Ground.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The primary transportation corridor within the planning district is the Skull Valley road. This county road was constructed by the Utah Department of Transportation, but was exchanged for other roadways. The county now maintains this road. Another access road serving the area is SR 199 connecting the Dugway Proving Grounds with SR 36 near Rush Valley. Locally it is known as the Johnson Pass Road, because it crosses through the Stansbury Mountains at Johnson Pass. These two roads are the primary access roads serving the area.

There are a number of other county roads within the area, the majority of which are unpaved. There is little demand to change the type of roads serving the area. However, there is a need to maintain public access to the Wasatch National Forest Land and also lands under jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. The county should implement a policy of maintaining public roads into these areas to maintain existing access to public lands. Roads such as the Cedar Mountain Road, Hasting Pass Road, 8-Mile Road, White Rocks Road, Redding Road, and others located within this area should be maintained. They should be designated as county roads and routine maintenance should be provided by the county. Due to limited development within this area, it is not anticipated that

any significant expansion of the transportation system will be required. .

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

With the exception of those people living in Terra, the population residing in this planning district is widely dispersed. There are a number of individual ranches which are served by private wells and septic tank systems. Potable water in Terra is available from private wells. Septic tanks are used as sewage disposal facilities throughout this district. There are other limited utilities available to the residents of this planning district. They consist primarily of electrical power and telephone service. Potable water is very limited within the Skull Valley area, primarily due to the high saline content in most of the groundwater. The groundwater located near the Cedar Mountains and also near the Stansbury Mountains is of higher quality and should be utilized where possible for public consumption. English Village has a central water and sewer system that is operated by the military which provides water, sewer, and other utilities to the residents of English Village. The final status of English Village (whether it becomes privately owned or stays military) will be a factor in the long-term requirements for infrastructure within this area. Presently all utilities are provided to the residents of English Village and these could be extended to the immediately surrounding area with little difficulty.

In the north end of Skull Valley, the historic use of groundwater was to service the railroad that passed through this area. Springs located around the Horseshoe Spring area were tapped and water lines extended northward to the railroad. This was the only potable water available within the region and was highly valued by the railroad. These resources should be protected and utilized for public benefit. There is considerable camping and recreation occurring in the Horseshoe Springs area, and it is important that water resources in the area be preserved.

Because of the density of population in Terra, it is recommended that installation of a centralized water system be encouraged. One of the primary benefits would be fire protection to the residences. A secondary



benefit is the improved availability of potable water to the homes.

### Natural Resources

Air and water quality are good, yet specific conditions of groundwater retrieved from wells is not yet available. Surface water in the Skull Valley consists of several small streams that drain the valley towards the north and into the Great Salt Lake. The creeks converge to form Delle Creek. The primary source of this water are springs located on the west side of the Stansbury Mountains and the southeast sides of the Cedar Mountain Range. The northern portion of the valley bottom is covered by mud flats that flank Delle Creek on either side and extend broadly. Water quality is poor at English Village and Dugway Proving Grounds, and must be demineralized.

The soils in the area have not proven suitable for much development. There is also little knowledge concerning mineral extraction potential in the valley. Historically, the development has been primarily for agricultural uses and livestock production with only limited mining and mineral exploration. This pattern continues today.

### Mountainsides, Vegetation and Wildlife

The Cedar, Stansbury, Onaqui, Sheeprock and Simpson mountain ranges form the boundaries of Skull Valley. These mountainsides direct and define the views in the valley. A portion of the Cedar Mountain Range has been proposed for official wilderness designation.

The slopes and floor of the valley are habitat for Greasewood, Saltgrass, Pickleweed, Cheatgrass, Utah Juniper, Douglas Fir, Maple and some cultivated land. This vegetation provides the habitat for deer, Pronghorn Antelope, Sage Grouse, Chukar and Raptors. Critical habitats which should be considered for protection from development impacts are:

- Critical habitat for Mule Deer located on western slopes of Stansbury Mountains;
- Critical year-long Sage Grouse habitat in northern

Skull Valley;

- Chukar habitat found in Stansbury, Simpson and Cedar mountain ranges; and
- Raptor nest sites located in Stansbury, Simpson and Cedar mountain ranges.

## **RECREATION**

### Recreation Resources

Much of this district is BLM land. Camping opportunities exist in the valley near Horseshoe Springs, and some camping takes place within the boundaries of Wasatch National Forest. Access to the national forest is at issue in the valley.

### Recreation Designation

The Stansbury, Onaqui, Sheeprock, Simpson and Dugway mountain ranges, the Pony Express Route and the Cedar Mountain Recreation Area, providing a variety of outdoor recreation and opportunities, are important recreation elements of the district.

### District Trail Concept

The shaded arrows in the above trail concept diagram indicate general travel patterns used to reach the variety of recreation resources in the district. The outdoor recreation features of the district are noted on the diagram. The dashed arrow relates the general direction of the Pony Express through the district. This district offers a portion of the Wasatch National Forest, other mountain recreation resources, natural and historic scenery.

## **CULTURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES**

### Settlement History

Skull Valley takes its name from the skulls found by some of the first explorers. The skulls have been attributed to an 1820s massacre of Indians or to early white explorers in the area, but also to the historic presence of herds of buffalo in the valley. The abandoned town of Iosepa is



named after the founder of the Mormon church, Joseph Smith, by Hawaiian immigrants to Utah. The town was settled in 1889. In 1896 leprosy broke out in the town and in 1916 the climate and arid farming of the valley were so wearisome for the settlers that they took the LDS Church's offer to return to Hawaii. The town was abandoned and later sold in 1917. A cemetery and few other remnants remain. The cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places.

- The Pony Express Route passes through this district on same route as Lookout Pass Road.
- Skull Valley Indian Reservation attests to history of Native Americans in county.
- Horseshoe Springs.

Please refer to the Historic Sites map at the end of Chapter Two.

### Historic Sites

- Iosepa, and the cemetery which remains to mark its place.

